

(v) Allegations of fact and supporting evidence, covering all lands in the petition area, which tend to establish that the area is unsuitable for all or certain types of surface coal mining operations, pursuant to specific criteria of sections 522(a) (2) and (3) of the Act, assuming that contemporary mining practices required under applicable regulatory programs would be followed if the area were to be mined. Each of the allegations of fact should be specific as to the mining operation, if known, and the portion(s) of the petitioned area and petitioner's interests to which the allegation applies and be supported by evidence that tends to establish the validity of the allegations for the mining operation or portion of the petitioned areas.

(2) The regulatory authority may request that the petitioner provide other supplementary information which is readily available.

(c) *Termination.* The regulatory authority shall determine what information must be provided by the petitioner to terminate designations of lands as unsuitable for surface coal mining operations.

(1) At a minimum, a complete petition for termination shall include—

(i) The petitioner's name, address, telephone number, and notarized signature;

(ii) Identification of the petitioned area, including its location and size and a U.S. Geological Survey topographic map outlining the perimeter of the petitioned area to which the termination petition applies;

(iii) An identification of the petitioner's interest which is or may be adversely affected by the designation that the area is unsuitable for surface coal mining operations including a statement demonstrating how the petitioner satisfies the requirements of paragraph (a) of this section;

(iv) Allegations of facts covering all lands for which the termination is proposed. Each of the allegations of fact shall be specific as to the mining operation, if any, and to portions of the petitioned area and petitioner's interests to which the allegation applies. The allegations shall be supported by evidence, not contained in the record of the designation proceeding, that tends

to establish the validity of the allegations for the mining operation or portion of the petitioned area, assuming that contemporary mining practices required under applicable regulatory programs would be followed were the area to be mined. For areas previously and unsuccessfully proposed for termination, significant new allegations of facts and supporting evidence must be presented in the petition. Allegations and supporting evidence should also be specific to the basis for which the designation was made and tend to establish that the designation should be terminated on the following bases:

(A) Nature or abundance of the protected resource or condition or other basis of the designation if the designation was based on criteria found in §762.11(b) of this chapter;

(B) Reclamation now being technologically and economically feasible if the designation was based on the criteria found in §762.11(a) of this chapter; or

(C) Resources or conditions not being affected by surface coal mining operations, or in the case of land use plans, not being incompatible with surface coal mining operations during and after mining, if the designation was based on the criteria found in §762.11(b) of this chapter;

(2) The State regulatory authority may request that the petitioner provide other supplementary information which is readily available.

§ 764.15 Initial processing, record-keeping, and notification requirements.

(a)(1) Within 30 days of receipt of a petition, the regulatory authority shall notify the petitioner by certified mail whether the petition is complete under §764.13 (b) or (c). Complete, for a designation or termination petition, means that the information required under §764.13 (b) or (c) has been provided.

(2) The regulatory authority shall determine whether any identified coal resources exist in the area covered by the petition, without requiring any showing from the petitioner. If the regulatory authority finds there are not any identified coal resources in that area, it shall return the petition to the

petitioner with a statement of the findings.

(3) If the regulatory authority determines that the petition is incomplete, frivolous, or that the petitioner does not meet the requirements of § 764.13(a), it shall return the petition to the petitioner with a written statement of the reasons for the determination and the categories of information needed to make the petition complete. A frivolous petition is one in which the allegations of harm lack serious merit.

(4) When considering a petition for an area which was previously and unsuccessfully proposed for designation, the regulatory authority shall determine if the new petition presents significant new allegations of facts with evidence which tends to establish the allegations. If the petition does not contain such material, the regulatory authority may choose not to consider the petition and may return the petition to the petitioner, with a statement of its findings and a reference to the record of the previous designation proceedings where the facts were considered.

(5) The regulatory authority shall notify the person who submits a petition of any application for a permit received which includes any area covered by the petition.

(6) The regulatory authority may determine not to process any petition received insofar as it pertains to lands for which an administratively complete permit application has been filed and the first newspaper notice has been published. Based on such a determination, the regulatory authority may issue a decision on a complete and accurate permit application and shall inform the petitioner why the regulatory authority cannot consider the part of the petition pertaining to the proposed permit area.

(b)(1) Promptly after a petition is received, the regulatory authority shall notify the general public of the receipt of the petition by a newspaper advertisement placed in the locale of the area covered by the petition, in the newspaper providing broadest circulation in the region of the petitioned area and in any official State register of public notices. The regulatory authority shall make copies of the petition available to the public and shall

provide copies of the petition to other interested governmental agencies, intervenors, persons with an ownership interest of record in the property, and other persons known to the regulatory authority to have an interest in the property. Proper notice to persons with an ownership interest of record in the property shall comply with the requirements of applicable State law.

(2) Promptly after the determination that a petition is complete, the regulatory authority shall request submissions from the general public of relevant information by a newspaper advertisement placed once a week for two consecutive weeks in the locale of the area covered by the petition, in the newspaper providing broadest circulation in the region of the petitioned area, and in any official State register of public notices.

(c) Until three days before the regulatory authority holds a hearing under § 764.17, any person may intervene in the proceeding by filing allegations of facts describing how the designation determination directly affects the intervenor, supporting evidence, a short statement identifying the petition to which the allegations pertain, and the intervenor's name, address and telephone number.

(d) Beginning from the date a petition is filed, the regulatory authority shall compile and maintain a record consisting of all documents relating to the petition filed with or prepared by the regulatory authority. The regulatory authority shall make the record available to the public for inspection free of charge and for copying at reasonable cost during all normal hours at the main office of the regulatory authority. The regulatory authority shall also maintain information at or near the area in which the petitioned land is located and make this information available to the public for inspection free of charge and for copying at reasonable cost during all normal business hours. At a minimum, this information shall include a copy of the petition.

[48 FR 41351, Sept. 14, 1983, as amended at 52 FR 49323, 49324, Dec. 30, 1987]

§ 764.17 Hearing requirements.

(a) Within 10 months after receipt of a complete petition, the regulatory authority shall hold a public hearing in the locality of the area covered by the petition. If all petitioners and intervenors agree, the hearing need not be held. The regulatory authority may subpoena witnesses as necessary. The hearing may be conducted with cross-examination of expert witnesses only. A record of the hearing shall be made and preserved according to State law. No person shall bear the burden of proof or persuasion. All relevant parts of the data base and inventory system and all public comments received during the public comment period shall be included in the record and considered by the regulatory authority in its decision on the petition.

(b)(1) The regulatory authority shall give notice of the date, time, and location of the hearing to:

(i) Local, State, and Federal agencies which may have an interest in the decision on the petition;

(ii) The petitioner and the intervenors; and

(iii) Any person known by the regulatory authority to have a property interest in the petitioned area. Proper notice to persons with an ownership interest of record shall comply with the requirements of applicable State law.

(2) Notice of the hearing shall be sent by certified mail to petitioners and intervenors, and by regular mail to government agencies and property owners involved in the proceeding, and postmarked not less than 30 days before the scheduled date of the hearing.

(c) The regulatory authority shall notify the general public of the date, time, and location of the hearing by placing a newspaper advertisement once a week for 2 consecutive weeks in the locale of the area covered by the petition and once during the week prior to the public hearing. The consecutive weekly advertisement must begin between 4 and 5 weeks before the scheduled date of the public hearing.

(d) The regulatory authority may consolidate in a single hearing the hearings required for each of several petitions which relate to areas in the same locale.

(e) Prior to designating any land areas as unsuitable for surface coal mining operations, the regulatory authority shall prepare a detailed statement, using existing and available information on the potential coal resources of the area, the demand for coal resources, and the impact of such designation on the environment, the economy, and the supply of coal.

(f) In the event that all petitioners and intervenors stipulate agreement prior to the hearing, the petition may be withdrawn from consideration.

§ 764.19 Decision.

(a) In reaching its decision, the regulatory authority shall use—

(1) The information contained in the data base and inventory system;

(2) Information provided by other governmental agencies;

(3) The detailed statement when it is prepared under § 764.17(e); and

(4) Any other relevant information submitted during the comment period.

(b) A final written decision shall be issued by the regulatory authority, including a statement of reasons, within 60 days of completion of the public hearing, or, if no public hearing is held, then within 12 months after receipt of the complete petition. The regulatory authority shall simultaneously send the decision by certified mail to the petitioner and intervenors and by regular mail to all other persons involved in the proceeding.

(c) The decision of the State regulatory authority with respect to a petition, or the failure of the regulatory authority to act within the time limits set forth in this section, shall be subject to judicial review by a court of competent jurisdiction in accordance with State law under section 526(e) of the Act and § 775.13 of this chapter. All relevant portions of the data base, inventory system, and public comments received during the public comment period set by the regulatory authority shall be considered and included in the record of the administrative proceeding.

§ 764.21 Data base and inventory system requirements.

(a) The regulatory authority shall develop a data base and inventory system